Pass Christian Area
1699 1999
Colonization Tricentennial Committee

Pass Christian, Mississippi

The Tricentennial

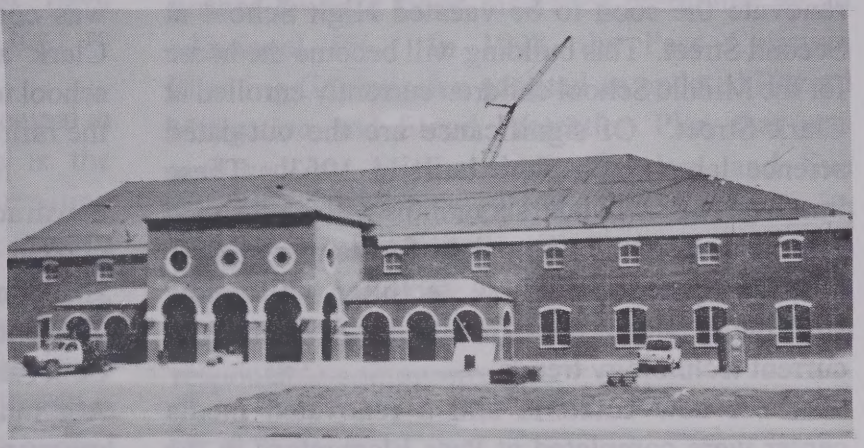
Volume 2, Issue Seven June 14, 1999

Outstanding!

***Jazz in the Pass*, headed by Jennie Lou Mintz, was a huge success. The phones at City Hall and the Chamber of Commerce continued to ring for weeks afterward in commendations favoring the continuance of the event as an annual affair. Jennie Lou's committee and volunteers are to be congratulated. It was estimated that between 1500 to 1800 residents and visitors found comfort under the extended Live Oak branches. Every tree embraced a conclave of resting admirers of the live bands that started at 11 a.m. and lasted until 9 p.m.**

The weather was a reward. With sea breezes lasting through the night, the audience gathered around the Gazebo as most everyone grabbed an umbrella or handkerchief to kick their heels in time to a Second Line that sometimes bordered on pandemonium.

The event was the Tricentennial Committee's most costly event, but ended better than just breaking even. Congratulations again to the entire Mintz family of volunteers!



A Vision Accompli

Public School Superintendent Philip Terrell is realizing the magnificence of a new Pass Christian High School as the soon to be opening will take place on August 6, 1999. The multi-story facility has an infrastructure to handle 750 students, but the 82,000 sq.ft. structure will serve a beginning student load of 600. The campus presently incorporates 8 acres of a 39 acre public school land mass that is located north of North Street, surrounded by the upscale Timber Ridge Subdivision.

The heavily supported Ten Million Dollar Bond Issue approved 2-years ago, resulted in the new High School Ground Breaking dedication which took place on May 19, 1998. Ever since, Superintendent Terrell has had his hands full, involving monthly monitoring and update meetings with contractors, in addition to watching for cost over-runs, yet keeping the opening schedules realistic.

A first look at the new High School facility causes one to wonder what the large pond in front will be used for. Superintendent Terrell explains it as a storm water management reservoir that will slow the discharge of rain waters as a

(Continued on next page)

precautionary measure that will prevent the area's existing drainage system from being burdened or threatened by flooding during inclement weather. It will also capture sediment and pollutants and prevent undue clogging. Therefore, the "Pond" will be dressed with sod surrounding its peripheral and it will eventually adopt a "natural habitat" appearance.

Included in the Bond Issue are funds to renovate the soon to be vacated High School at Second Street. This building will become the home for the Middle School children currently enrolled at Clark Street. Of significance are the out-dated science labs which were built in 1963. These improvements will take six months with a projected Middle School move-in date for January 2000. New equipment and new facilities will allow students to be in a better position to keep up with current technology trends.

A new cafeteria and a renovated media center were completed at Pass Elementary in the Fall of 1998. In addition, a large gymnasium and four classrooms were added to the DeLisle campus. As these projects are finalized, the Superintendent and his administrative staff will move to the vacated Middle School Complex on Clark Street, resulting in a well planned maneuver of "musical chairs," allowing for a grand upgrading and modernizing of the entire Pass Christian Public School District, which encompasses 53 square miles, reaching several miles north of Interstate-10.

Public School History

Early historic records are lost as they pertain to Pass Christian public schools prior to the Civil War. However, some public school activity is evidenced by Finley Heirn, the first Mayor of Pass Christian, having also served as a Public School Commissioner. Existing records also indicate that there was a school house that had been built on Second Street near Pine Street.

In 1868, the state constitution established the first uniform school act and soon afterward follwed by the City having rented classrooms at various locations; such as the Masonic Lodge building formerly located on Davis Avenue, and in the George Brandt building located south of Beach Avenue. The 1877 City Minutes Book describes separate school districts for White and Black with separate School Boards. In 1887, the white school was conducted on Clark Street where the Middle School is now located. In 1889, a new building was constructed by Fred Sutter at the corner of Clark and Second Streets, allowing the Negro school to move to the vacated Clark school north of the railroad tracks.

In 1908, a multi-story school building was constructed at Heirn and Beach Avenues, the current City Hall location. This building was abandoned with the 1937 construction of the white elementary and highschool building at Second Street and Church Avenue, the current high school. A gymnasium was built there in 1949 with further renovations in 1958.

In 1939, the Black school, then known as the *Harrison County Training School*, had its name changed to Randolph Highschool and in 1954, Mrs. Minor Sutter donated additional land and a house to the school. New additions to the campus were dedicated in 1960, shortly before George Watson became its principal in 1961. In the 1969-70 school year, following Hurricane Camille and the desegregation of schools, Randolph High became Pass Christian Middle School.

In 1950, Henderson Point, Pass Christian Isles and other areas were included in the Pass Christian school district.

In 1961, the DeLisle Elementary school was renovated and in 1965, the current North Street Elementary School was opened.

However, Hurricane Camille exacted heavy damages on every school building resulting in every school having been rebuilt while trailer classrooms were pressed into service. Now, 30 years later, necessary school plant changes are taking place as described in the feature story on the front page.

Insurance and Protection

Reflecting on the rising cost of insurance is significant to all Coast residents, however, Pass Christian property owners pay less. Monitored by the Code Office conducted by Peggy Johnson and influenced by the Mayor and the City Council, are various measures which throughout the years has brought about improved measures that have resulted in the reduction of premium costs for Fire Insurance and even Flood Insurance.

As reported by Eddie Bigelow, a principal in guiding some of these cost reductions is the following history of Pass Christian's participation in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS).

Prior to 1970, flood insurance was simply not available at any price. After Hurricane Camille, the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) was enacted and relegated under the control of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). In 1971, Pass Christian became a participating member of NFIP which resulted in property owners and renters gaining the opportunity to purchase insurance to protect against flood losses. In 1989, the Community Rating System (CRS) program was initiated to reward communities for reaching out beyond the minimum requirements of the administration. Points are awarded for activities, such as: maintenance of elevation certificates for flood hazard area properties, outreach projects promoting awareness of flood hazards and the NFIP, open space preservation, floodplain management planning, drainage system maintenance, flood warning systems, and stormwater management systems (as per example, the water retention reservoir at the new Pass High School on North Street).

Through diligence, in 1992, the Pass was awarded a "Class 9" Flood Insurance Rating which resulted in a 5% premium reduction. Miss Bigelow guided the city's planning for adopting a Hazard Mitigation and Flood Protection Plan, which was the first in the State of Mississippi and one of the first in the nation. The Pass Plan has been used as a model for other communities statewide and in other areas vulnerable to hurricane produced flooding.

In 1993, Pass Christian amended its CRS application and was awarded the first "Class 8" flood insurance rating in Mississippi, which has further lowered flood insurance premiums by an additional 5%. In 1998, the Pass Christian Planning Commission adopted an updated Hazard Mitigation and Flood Protection Plan that was authored by Misses Eddie Bigelow and Sue Chamberlain. These actions, along with maintenance and regimented effectiveness by Miss Peggy Johnson at the Code Office, has resulted in Pass Christian's continued leadership as a responsible community.

THE SUTTERS

Frederick Sutter arrived at Pass Christian in 1848, having left Switzerland for California to join his uncle, John Augustus Sutter, who had been the first person to discover Gold in California on his land that he called *New Helvetica*, now called Sacramento.

However, Frederick loved the Pass and decided to remain, forestalling his gold fever and built a home on Clark Avenue. This homestead was donated to the Randolph High School (now Middle School) in honor of his son Minor E. Sutter.

In 1885, Frank Sutter was awarded a contract to build the original City Hall and Council Chambers at Beach Avenue. It was replaced in 1926 with a three-story brick building that was badly damaged by Camille and was razed in 1970. (According to Nap Cassibry, Frank Sutter also built a courthouse at Mississippi City, now a part of Gulfport.

Frank E. Sutter built a school building in 1889 at Clark and Second. After serving as mayor for several terms, Sutter died in office in 1922. He referred to Pass Christian as America's Garden of Eden and had the logo emblazoned on the town's official stationary. A visionary, he promoted the idea of a protected sea-wall for the Pass and for the Coast. He also promoted the Mexican Gulf Golf Club which was constructed on Clark Avenue. This was the first golf course in the Pass.

Frank Sutter also built the rectory of the Trinity Church following the tradition of his father, Frederick Sutter, who had built the church before him.

Frank's brother, John, dug the first artesian well in Pass Christian, and continued with well construction throughout the Gulf coast area.

The Beach

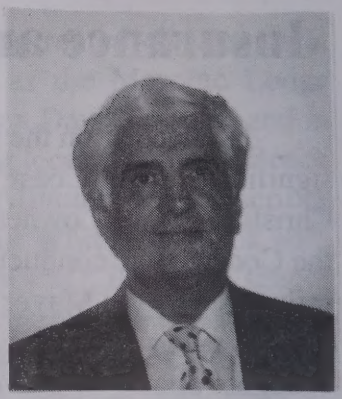
by Jessie Heitzmann

When my heart is troubled,
When my mind seeks peace,
When my soul needs comfort,
'Tis here I find release.

God takes the time to care
For each tiny grain of sand.
Surely then He cares for me,
Guides me gently with His hand.

On the beach I'm not alone,
For He is ever there with me,
Walking always by my side,
Ever constant as the sea.

Lighthouse Master



Without equivocation, Robert Pundsack contributed the necessary funds to construct the plastic encasement cover on the Pass Christian Lighthouse model that was built and donated by Buddy Diboll. -- And, unsolicited, Pundsack cut the first check to start the ball rolling for contributions to construct the Pass Christian lighthouse even before knowing where it would be built.

Robert N. Pundsack is president of Fillette, Green, an International Steamship Agency and Freight Forwarders having established their headquarters in the Hancock Bank Annex Building on Scenic Drive since 1995.

WINE AND CHEESE

The Historical Society is celebrating their summer meeting suspension with a Wine and Cheese party on June 14 at 7:30 p.m.. Staged at the Historical Society Building on Scenic Drive, members and prospectives are invited to see the new computer facility as well as meeting new and old friends.

TIME TO GET STONED

The d'Iberville Stone, has been replicated as a Tricentennial pendant by a committee headed by Tracy Gordon Goff. Only 100 of these handmade sterling silver d'Iberville Stone brooches were made. They can be purchased locally from *Parker's* and *Valentino's*, or by calling Tracy at 452-5819 or 452-5185.

FLOATING CAPITAL

Margie Hamilton out-did herself by selling the Tricentennial Mardi Gras float for $1500.00 and turning the entire proceeds over to the Tricentennial Committee, This of course made Dayton Robinson's day. The float had a major remake and overhaul with fund advancement from the Tricentennial Committee. But, Margie Hamilton and Dana Dedeaux, with their working "krewe," hammered freshly cut plywood panels to replace the entire siding. They called in local young and old artists to give it an Historic heritage facade that won recognition in Pass Christian's Mardi Gras Parade.

To top it all, Margie and Dr. Hamilton purchased the original float with their personal funds and including that, donated the entire proceeds. Thanks, to them, -- for a job well done -- and for their contribution!

PASS CUISINE ALIVE

Charlie Melson has agreed to take on the project to get the Tricentennial Cookbook in production.

At last count, recipes of choice were submitted by the following:
Lark Johnson, Ermagene DeLoney, Helen Currie Caire, Spencer Murphy, Mitchelle Smith, Arvilla Stoddard, Cecile Clement, Mrs. H.H. Hanson, Eddie Bigelow, Julia Cerra, Baxter Jones, Irene Hodges, Dan Ellis, and Nan Keel (now deceased).

Leading Chefs to give a hand with some wonderful choicy submittals have been prepared by Warren LeRuth and Guy Bruyndonckx.

As a special treat, a recipe booklet entitled *Tried, Tested, and True since 1907* are a result of a compilation by Idella Barnes and Doris Bradley. These are the tried and tested favorites of Pass Christian's soulful recipes prepared by Mary L. Davis, including chitterlings, wild game, and even *"Baked Coon"*.

Send your recipes with a short anecdotal message about your entry to POB 354, or call Charles Melson at 452-9356. He and wife Melanie are old hands in the kitchen. The two of them prepared most of the food that was served at the last Tricentennial Gala.

The Ladner Odyssey

As part of the Coast's ongoing Tricentennial celebrations, the Long Beach Historical Society, under the direction of Mary Ellen Alexander and her corps of able volunteers, assembled a Legion of Ladners in commemorating the Ladners of Cat Island, who also took possession of an English grant in 1788, that was later confirmed by the Spanish Crown during their governance of the area where Long Beach is now located.

Nap Cassibry's *"Ladner Odyssey"* was singled out as a valuable contribution to Coastal history, especially of all of the early French settlers including, the Sauciers, the Nicaises, the Dubuissons, the Favres, and so many others not here mentioned.

A new state authorized historic marker is now planted on the beach concourse along the Gulf in front of the USM campus, memorializing another aspect of the early history of Long Beach.

Not just Big, *But, REAL BIG!*

It was the Winter of 1811-12 that the Mississippi River had changed its course due to the largest earthquake in North America's history. It was estimated at 20 times more powerful than the San Francisco earthquake of 1906.

Three massive quakes took place and changed the course of the river for hundreds of miles along its length. The epicenter was at New Madrid, MO.

SAIL HO!

"Just hold onto the points!" exclaimed team captain Danny Killeen as Pass Christian skippers racked up a tally of 49 points, bettering the runner-up by 17. It was the 50th Chapman Regatta event which the Pass had not won since 1993, making this the eighth time to capture the title. Pass sailors in the event included Kevin Northrop, Jennifer Schmitt, Shelly Killeen, John Dane III, Danny Killeen, Oliver Peneguy, John F. Dane, Sid Charbonnet, and David Taylor, Jr.

Because of the Pass Christian Yacht Club's continued successes, a busy season awaits. As the 1998 champions of both the Lipton Junior Regatta and the Lipton Regatta, PCYC will host both championships on August 7-8 and on Labor Day Weekend. --And, on August 21-22, the annual all-women's Knost Regatta championship will take place, making for a crowded agenda. Furthermore, this year of 1999 marks the 150th Anniversary for the "Birthplace of Gulf Coast Yachting." The first Regatta, held in 1849, caused the formation of the nation's second yacht club established here in Pass Christian following that of New York City.

THE PASS WITH CAIRE

Ronnie and Katy Caire published a number of pamphlets, newspapers, and books pertaining to Pass Christian. Both had been active in public relations affairs in New Orleans and in their dual residency of Pass Christian and even at Waveland, where Ronnie was listed as the Town Historian. Their local newspapers were called the Owl, and the Bird, and Super Bird. Ronnie never failed to have imagination.

Of particular significance is their "History of Pass Christian" which was published in 1976. Although some of the conclusions made and some of the related legends may not have happened in their exact occurrence, the book is a sole source reference for much of the City's historic information making it a valuable documentary.

The book consists of 122 typed pages, listing numerous chronologies of events, personalities, historic places, and origins of many institutions and churches of the Pass. The overall approach does not lend itself to easy reading, but is a masterpiece for browsing through an abundance of interesting facets from the past.

Final Call

This is the last call for $!5-or-more membership contributions. Those members who have paid have been the financial supporters in defraying the costs of printing and mailing the monthly newsletters. It is to them that all readers of these periodicals should give thanks. Paying Members have also received a decorative logo certificate as a keepsake for their support. A final membership roster will be printed on a special manuscript scroll and will be distributed at upcoming public events. The deadline is July 1, for final tallying.

The Heirn Family

Finley Bottom Heirn served as first Mayor of Pass Christian, supposedly from 1838 through 1853. The position was then known as Recorder and the terms were of two years duration. He was called back for another term in 1882 at the age of 77. Remaining active in city and regional government, he served as Public school commissioner, Election commissioner, and was elected the first President of the County Police Board, which was equivalent to the current County Board of Supervisors. He died at age 85 while attempting to aid one of his employees who had gotten entangled in saw-mill equipment. He was owner and operator of a saw-mill employing 500 men at Pitcher's Point, near the division line between the Pass and Long Beach.

Roger Alden Heirn, a merchant marine sea captain. Before 1850, he built the house at 943 East Scenic Drive, which he left to his three children. Roger was sales agent for Edward Livingston, who was one of the first owners of all of the Pass Christian peninsula. Roger was the hired to build the Lighthouse and he became more heavily involved in land sales following the Henderson, Hughes and Shipmann acquisition of the Livingston tract.

Caroline Heirn served as the City's Lighthouse keeper from 1844 until 1861 when the light was closed due to the Civil War. She also served as the City's first Postmaster in 1859. The lighthouse was located at the site of present day City Hall.

Descendants of the Heirn family now live in Long Beach.

Leading Personalities of the 1830s

Finley B. Heirn, first Mayor, land sales
Rodger A. Heirn, one of first residents, land sales, first Lighthouse keeper and supervised its construction.
William Gardner Hewes, Resident, John Henderson's brother-in-law
Fredrick Searle Hewes (son of Wm.)
Alfred V. Davis, Vintner of Scuppernong Wine
Larned Davis, businessman, Justice of the Peace
Benjamin Davis, Justice of Peace, store owner
John Brill, Drug store and wharf at Market St, Sheriff
John Henderson, State and US Senator 1837-45, land sales
Charles Shipman, land sales, started first hotel which became the Pass Christian Hotel
David M. Hughs, land sales
William H. White, resident and land sales
Dr. William H. Calvert, resident and land sales
Charles Asmar, freed slave, owned all of mid-town, land sales

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The Tricentennial

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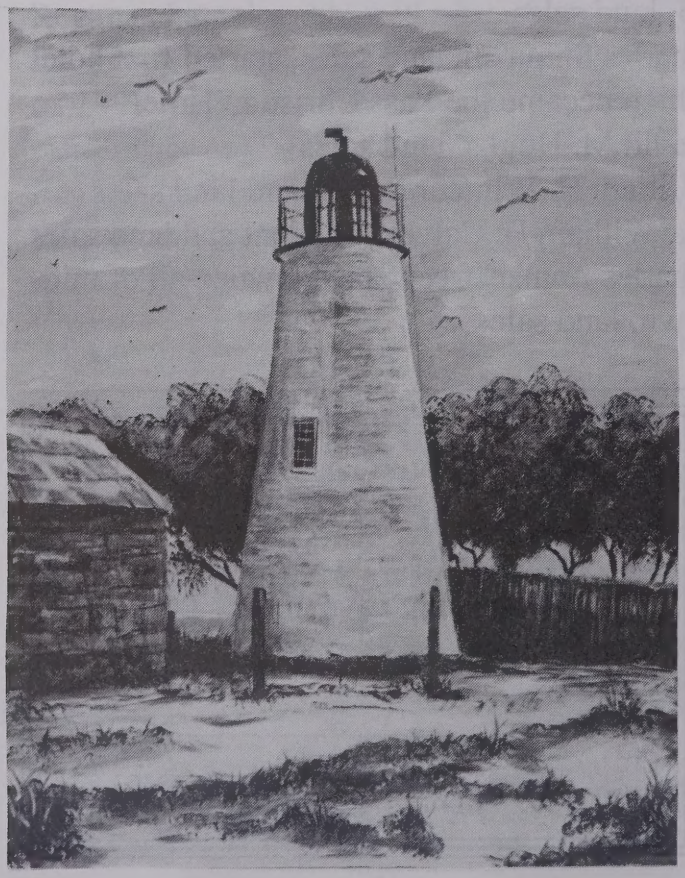
Cat Island Lighthouse

The "Cat Island Lighthouse" by Geri Dendis is the latest in her series of paintings of the southwestern area of the Gulf of Mexico.



The lighthouse on Cat Island, south of Pass Christian, was built and designed by contractor Winslow Lewis in 1831 as an identical replica to the Pass Christian Lighthouse. George Riolly of Pass Christian oversaw the construction and served as its first Light Keeper from June 10, 1831. Ramon Cuevas served as Light keeper from 1834 to 1861.

The significance of the Cat Island lighthouse was that it marked the approach to New Orleans which during the 1700s through mid-1800s was reached via the Rigolets to Lake Pontchartrain and on to Port St. John, then the northern entryway to New Orleans. Not having been built on a sound foundation, the light tower suffered through many storms including perils during the Civil War. In 1871, the brick from the old lighthouse was removed and replaced by a screwpile tower. The new one was discontinued on September 22, 1937.

Copies of the Pass Christian Lighthouse and the Cat Island Lighthouse are available at several local shops or by calling Geri at 452-7384.